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Message Text

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NODIS
FOR Z BRZEZINSKI

FOLLOWING REPEAT PRETORIA 5664 ACTION SECSTATE 22 OCT 77

QUOTE

S E C R E T PRETORIA 5664

NODIS

FOR SECRETARY AND MOOSE AND AMB YOUNG

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, SF
SUBJECT: EVENTS OF OCTOBER 19: A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

1. SUMMARY: OCTOBER 19 BANNINGS/DETENTIONS ARE PART OF A
STRATEGY TO QUASH BLACK DISSENT. IT CONFIRMS UNWILLINGNESS
TO OPEN A DIALOGUE
WITH GENUINE BLACK LEADERS AND TO PRESS
ON WITH SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT. THIS STAND CHALLENGES THE
PUBLIC POSITION VP MONDALE TOOK AT VIENNA. WE RECOMMEND STRONG
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MORAL CONDEMNATION AND LIMITED CURTAILMENT OF MISSION
ACTIVITIES. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SCOPE, TARGETTING AND TIMING OF THE BANNINGS/DETENTIONS
OF OCTOBER 19, COUPLED WITH OTHER RECENT ACTIONS OF THE
GOVERNMENT, LEAD US TO BELIEVE THAT IT IS NOT AN ISOLATED
REACTION BUT PART OF A CAREFUL STRATEGY WHICH IS UNFOLDING.
AT THE HEART OF THE STRATEGY IS THE GOVERNMENT'S UNDERLYING
FEAR, SHARED BY AN INCREASING NUMBER OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING WHITES,
THAT THEIR EXISTENCE IS BEING THREATENED BY INTERNAL AND

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EXTERNAL FORCES AND THE CONVICTION THAT THE DEFENSES OF THE LAAGER MUST BE STRENGTHENED. THE PARTICULAR STEPS TAKEN MAY NOT SEEM RATIONAL, BUT TO THE INSULAR MIND OF THE AFRIKANER, OBSESSED WITH "SURVIVAL" AND THE CORRECTNESS OF HIS CAUSE, IT IS A MORE LOGICAL ALTERNATIVE THAN BOWING TO PRESSURES WHICH COULD LEAD TO LOSS OF WHITE CONTROL.

3. THE GOVERNMENT SEES PRESSURES INCREASING RATHER THAN DECREASING. ON THE INTERNATIONAL FRONT IT BELIEVES WESTERN COUNTRIES WILL RESORT TO SANCTIONS TO OBTAIN THEIR OBJECTIVES IN RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA, WHILE CONTINUING TO ENCOURAGE BLACKS IN SOUTH AFRICA IN THEIR STRUGGLE FOR EQUAL RIGHTS. INTERNALLY, THE LEADERS ARE CONCERNED THAT THEY HAVE NOT SUCCEEDED IN PUTTING DOWN STUDENT UNREST AND RESTORING NORMALCY TO THE TOWNSHIPS. IT IS TRUE THAT NO VIOLENCE HAS DEVELOPED THAT THE AUTHORITIES HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO HANDLE, BUT THEY RECOGNIZE THAT AS LONG AS DISTURBANCES CONTINUE, THERE IS THE DANGER THAT THEY MIGHT GROW AND SPREAD TO A DEGREE WHERE THE SECURITY FORCES CANNOT COPE EXCEPT BY RESORT TO SEVERE MEASURES. THIS IS WHERE THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PRESSURES BECOME MUTUALLY REINFORCING AS OCCURRED IN THE BIKO CASE.

4. UNWILLING TO MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF MEANINGFUL CHANGE FOR BLACKS, THE GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO HAVE EMBARKED ON A STRATEGY THAT HAS THESE ELEMENTS:

-- CONTINUE TO COOPERATE IN THE SEARCH FOR NEGOTIATED SOLUTIONS TO THE RHODESIAN AND NAMIBIAN PROBLEMS, PROVIDED SUCH COOPERATION DOES NOT DEVIATE FROM THE FUNDAMENTALS OF NATIONALIST POLICY OR IS LIKELY TO CREATE UNMANAGEABLE POLITICAL PROBLEMS ON THE HOME FRONT;

-- ATTEMPT TO RALLY THE COLOREDS AND INDIANS AROUND THE WHITES THROUGH A CONSTITUTIONAL PLAN WHICH, WHILE THEORETICALLY CARRYING THE SEEDS OF POWER SHARING, IN PRACTICE ALLOWS CONTINUE WHITE DOMINATION;

-- GO TO A NATIONAL ELECTION NOW BEFORE THE STORM CLOUDS GET DARKER IN ORDER TO SECURE A NEW AND STRONGER MANDATE, TO OBTAIN ENDORSEMENT FOR THE CONSTITUTIONAL PLAN AND TO GAIN A FREER HAND TO DEAL WITH THE NATION'S TROUBLES;

-- CRACK DOWN HARD ON THOSE WHO MASTERMIND OR ENCOURAGE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS AS A MEANS OF ENDING STUDENT UNREST AND REESTABLISHING A CLIMATE WHERE THE GOVERNMENT CAN PRESS FORWARD WITH SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT (THERE IS A PARALLELISM HERE WITH ACTION TAKEN IN THE EARLY 1960S AGAINST ANC AND PAC IN THE WAKE OF WHICH THE HOMELAND POLICY WAS INTRODUCED);

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-- ACCELERATE IMPLEMENTATION OF SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT, INTRODUCING CERTAIN MODIFICATIONS AIMED AT REDUCING DISCONTENT AMONG URBAN BLACKS, AGAIN WITHOUT YIELDING ON THE FUNDAMENTALS OF APARTHEID.

5. MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR AND INFORMATION CONNIE MULDER IN A RECENT ELECTORAL SPEECH SUMMED UP NATIONALIST THINKING WHEN HE SAID THAT WITH CURRENT WORLD TRENDS MOVING IN A CONSERVATIVE DIRECTION WHAT SOUTH AFRICA NEEDED WAS THREE
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OR FOUR YEARS OF RELATIVE TRANQUILITY IN WHICH TO PUT INTO EFFECT THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL PLAN AND INDEPENDENCE FOR THE HOME-LANDS. THEN PRESSURES ON SOUTH AFRICA COULD BE EXPECTED TO EASE.

6. LOOKED AT FROM THE FOREGOING PERSPECTIVE, WHAT THE GOVERNMENT DID LAST WEDNESDAY IS A LOGICAL STEP IN SHORING UP ITS DEFENSES. IN ONE STROKE IT REMOVED MOST OF THE ACTIVE AND EFFECTIVE BLACK LEADERSHIP (AND A LARGE PROPORTION OF THE MISSION'S PRIMARY CONTACTS IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY). IT ELIMINATED MAJOR PUBLICATIONS TO WHICH THE BLACKS LOOKED FOR INSPIRATION AND AS OUTLETS FOR THEIR GRIEVANCES AND ASPIRATIONS. THE BANNING OF THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE DESTROYED ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CHANNELS OF WHITE LIBERAL SUPPORT TO THE BLACKS. THE IMPOSITION OF BANS ON A HANDFUL OF CRUSADING WHITES SERVES AS A FORCEFUL WARNING TO OTHERS WHO WORK IN THE BLACK CAUME.

THE CLOSURE OF THE WORLD NEWSPAPER, THE DETENTION OF ITS EDITOR PERCY QOBOZA, AND THE BANNING OF DONALD WOODS OF THE EAST LONDON DAILY DISPATCH (POSSIBLY PICKED BECAUSE OF KRUGER'S LONG VENDETTA AGAINST HIM) CARRY THE MESSAGE THAT THE SAG WILL NOT HESITATE TO MOVE AGAINST OTHER NEWSPAPERS CONSIDERED TO BE UNACCEPTABLY CRITICAL AND DISRUPTIVE. AMONG THE POSSIBLE IMMEDIATE DIVIDENDS PROBABLY HOPED FOR BY VORSTER IS A MORE CIRCUMSPECT PRESS APPROACH TO SAG HANDLING OF THE BIKO CASE. SIGNIFICANTLY, NO IMPORTANT COLORED OR INDIAN LEADER, PUBLICATION OR AGENCY WAS INCLUDED IN THE BANNING/DETENTION ORDER OF OCTOBER 19. (THE FOUR INDIANS DETAINED WERE ACTIVE IN BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS AND NOT WITHIN THEIR OWN COMMUNITY.) BLACK LABOR UNIONS AND CHIEF BUTHELEZI'S INKATHA MOVEMENT ALSO PASSED UNAFFECTED. THIS SUGGESTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WISHED TO DO NOTHING THAT MIGHT ANTAGONIZE THE INDIAN AND COLORED
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COMMUNITIES, AS IT SEEKS TO BRING THEM INTO THE WHITE LAAGER, OR STIR UP THE ZULUS.

7. WHETHER OR NOT THE SAG WINS THE INTERNAL RESPITE IT

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EXPECTS TO ACHIEVE BY REPEATING THE TACTICS OF THE 1960S ONLY TIME WILL TELL. WE DOUBT THAT IT WILL BECAUSE THE NATURE OF THE PRESSURES WHICH SOUTH AFRICA FACES TODAY AT HOME AND ABROAD ARE DIFFERENT AND STRONGER. WHAT DOES EMERGE FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION IS A REJECTION OF DIALOGUE WITH GENUINE BLACK LEADERS AND THE DETERMINATION TO HOLD ITS COURSE ON SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT. SOME LIBERAL WHITES--ENGLISH AND AFRIKAANS SPEAKING--ARGUE THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO RESORT TO THIS MEASURE IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH THE PREREQUISITE STABILITY FOR INTORDUCTION OF MAJOR CHANGES FOR URBAN BLACKS AND HOMELAND CONSOLIDATION. WHILE ONE CANNOT DISMISS THIS REASONING OUT OF HAND, THERE IS LITTLE HARD EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT IT. WE ARE INCLINED TO THINK IT REPRESENTS A STRONG LEMENT OF WISHFUL THINKING.

8. IF THE ASSESSMENT IS CORRECT THAT VORSTER HAS OPTED FOR THE COURSE OF NO FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE, WE ARE FACED WITH THE PROBLEM OF HOW TO REACT TO THE OCTOBER 19 DECISIONS, GIVEN THE POSITION PRESENTED BY THE VICE PRESIDENT TO PM VORSTER AT VIENNA AND AFRICAN EXPECTATIONS RELATING THERETO. ONE COURSE WOULD BE TO INITIATE A MEASURED PROGRAM OF ACTIONS TAKEN FROM THE CHECKLIST PREPARED IN CONNECTION WITH TH POLICY REVIEW FOR VIENNA. ANOTHER, LESS DRASTIC, COURSE WOULD BE TO MAINTAIN A STRONG MORAL POSITION AGAINST REPRESSIVE SAG ACTIONS WHILE AVOIDING RESTRICTIVE MEASURES AT THIS STAGE.

9. I AM PERSUADED THAT WE SHOULD SEEK A CAREFUL MIX OF THE TWO. THE FACTORS TO KEEP IN MIND ARE:

(A) WITH GENERAL ELECTIONS LESS THAN A MONTH-AND-A-HALF AWAY, WE SHOULD AVOID GIVING VORSTER AMMUNITION TO SUPPORT HIS CHARGE THAT WE ARE STRANGLING SOUTH AFRICA AND THERBY RUN THE RISK OF ADDING TO HIS MAJORITY. THE VICE PRESIDENT'S RAND DAILY MAIL
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INTERVIEW HAS DEFLATED THAT SPURIOUS ARGUMENT.

(B)
SOUTH AFRICA'S CONTINUED COOPERATION ON THE RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA SETTLEMENTS SHOULD BE SAFEGUARDED. WHILE THE SAG ALSO VIEWS SUCH SETTLEMENTS AS VERY MUCH IN ITS INTERESTS AND IS NOT LIKELY TO WITHDRAW ITS COOPERATION CAPRICIOUSLY, WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL NOT TO PUSH A TESTY VORSTER TO THE POINT OF MORE ILLOGICAL ACTIONS THAN THOSE ALREADY TAKEN.

(C) HOW BEST TO SUPPORT THOSE SEEKING CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA, ESPECIALLY IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY, SHOULD BE EXAMINED. AT A TIME WHEN BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS IS BEGINNING TO TRANSCEND THE HURDLES OF TRIBAL RIVALRIES, DIFFERENCES IN URBAN AND RURAL OUTLOOK, THE GENERATION GAP AND OTHER FACTORS THAT HAVE PREVENTED BLACKS FROM DEVELOPING COHESION AND STRENGTH, I BELIEVE THE MOST EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTION WE CAN MAKE IS TO TAKE A STRONG MORAL STAND AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND REPRESSION

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(AS WE HAVE BEEN DOING SINCE VIENNA) WHILE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACKS SORT OUT THEIR DIFFERENCES AND FIND CHANNELS FOR BUILDING A COHERENT, EFFECTIVE MECHANISM FOR APPLYING THEIR POTENTIALLY ENORMOUS BUT UNUSED LEVERAGE. WE SHOULD ALSO NOT OVERLOOK THE POSSIBILITY THAT ANCILLARY TO THE BLACK EFFORT THERE MAY DEVELOP IN WHITE RANKS A GROWING DISILLUSIONMENT WITH VORSTER WHICH COULD LEAD TO PRESSURES ON THE GOVERNMENT TO ALTER COURSE. OUR EFFECTIVENESS IN SOUTH AFRICA IS ENHANCED IF THE FAILURE OF CURRENT VORSTER POLICIES ARE VIEWED AS THE RESULT OF INHERENT WEAKNESSES RATHER THAN THE CONSEQUENCES OF WHAT IS REGARDED AS PUNITIVE ACTION BY OUTSIDERS. THE BIKO AFFAIR HAS HAD THIS EFFECT. PRELIMINARY INDICATIONS OF REACTION TO THE OCTOBER 19 MEASURES SHOW THAT DESPITE AN INITIAL PUBLIC CLOSING OF RANKS WITHIN AFRIKANERDOM, THERE ARE RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE WISDOM AND CONSEQUENCES OF

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SO DRASTIC A MEASURE.

(D) AT THE SAME TIME WE WILL NEED TO CONSIDER SOME CONCRETE ACTIONS WITH WHICH TO DEAL WITH THE GATHERING STORM AT THE UN AND HOW OUR RESPONSE AFFECTS OUR CREDIBILITY IN BLACK AFRICA. THIS IS HARD GO GAUGE FROM THIS DISTANCE. IN THE PAST UN PRESSURES HAVE FOCUSED ON ARMS EMBARGO AND INVESTMENT. I WONDER WHETHER GOING ALONG WITH AN ARMS EMBARGO AND REDUCING OUR DAO BY WITHDRAWING OUR NAVAL ATTACHE WOULD NOT MEET UN EXIGENCIES? I WOULD PREFER NOT TO GET INVOLVED IN THE INVESTMENT FIELD SINCE IT HAS LARGELY DRIED UP ANYWAY AND RECENT EVENTS WILL PLACE FURTHER DAMPERS. CLOSING OUT THE COMMERCIAL FUNCTION IN JOHANNESBURG IS A GOOD ALTERNATIVE.

10. I WOULD RECOMMEND FOR THE DEPARTMENT'S CONSIDERATION THIS RANGE OF STEPS AS A MEASURED RESPONSE:

(A) OBTAINING WHILE I AM IN WASHINGTON OF A SENSE OF THE CONGRESS RESOLUTION EXPRESSING PROFOUND CONCERN ABOUT THE OCTOBER 19 ACTION AND URGING REMOVAL OF THE BANS AND RELEASE OF THOSE DETAINED.

(B) A PRIVATE MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT TO VORSTER WHICH I WOULD DELIVER ON MY RETURN CONVEYING THIS RESOLUTION AS AN EXPRESSION OF THE DEEPEST PREOCCUPATION OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND ASKING FOR A RAPID, PROGRESSIVE LIFTING OF BANS AND RELEASE OF DETAINEES. (DEPENDING ON VORSTER'S RESPONSE, WE WOULD DECIDE HOW AND WHEN TO MAKE THE CONTENTS OF THE MESSAGE PUBLIC.)

(C) AUTHORIZATION FOR MISSION OFFICERS TO VISIT BANNED LEADERS IN A VISIBLE WAY (I.E. TIPPING OFF THE PRESS) AS A MANIFESTATION OF US INTEREST AND SUPPORT. (VISITS WOULD BE MADE CONSISTENT WITH TERMS OF THE BANNING ORDER SO AS NOT TO PREJUDICE THE PERSONS CONCERNED.)

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(D) AUTHORIZATION FOR MISSION OFFICERS TO VISIT DETAINEES
WHO ARE PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCES IN THEIR PLACES OF DETENTION.

(E) PUBLIC ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FUND TO
ASSIST THE FAMILIES OF DETAINEES.

(F) SUPPORT IN THE UN FOR AN OBLIGATORY ARMS EMBARGO.

(G) REMOVAL OF THE NAVAL ATTACHE FROM PRETORIA.

(H) CLOSING OF THE COMMERCIAL OFFICE IN JOHANNESBURG.
BOWDLER
UNQUOTE VANCE

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